

# POWER OF THE PEOPLE:

## Lawrence and Fair Housing

On July 18, 1967, Lawrence adopted City Ordinance 3749. This law made it illegal to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin in the purchase or rental of housing. Securing these fair housing protections in Lawrence marked a victory for a grassroots effort driven by people determined to end practices of segregation and spurred on by the Kansas legislature's failure to pass a statewide fair housing bill a year earlier. This exhibit tells the story of their efforts and how people working together can be a force for positive change in our community.

### STRUGGLES AND SETBACKS

Founded during the nation's struggle over the spread of slavery in the 1850s, Lawrence emerged as the center of the anti-slavery movement in Kansas Territory and was considered a champion of freedom. Though proud of its anti-slavery heritage, Lawrence was not immune to the prejudiced attitudes about race that prevailed nationwide in the years following the Civil War. By the early 1900s, segregation was common—blacks could not eat in most restaurants, could sit only in restricted areas in movie theaters, and only lived in certain neighborhoods. Though embracing an open admissions policy, the University of Kansas also upheld racial separation. Black students could not play intercollegiate sports, participate in band or glee club, or join fraternities and sororities. Actions that today would be considered insensitive were not questioned. KU's pep club, known as the "KU KU Klub," marched at football games wearing white robes.

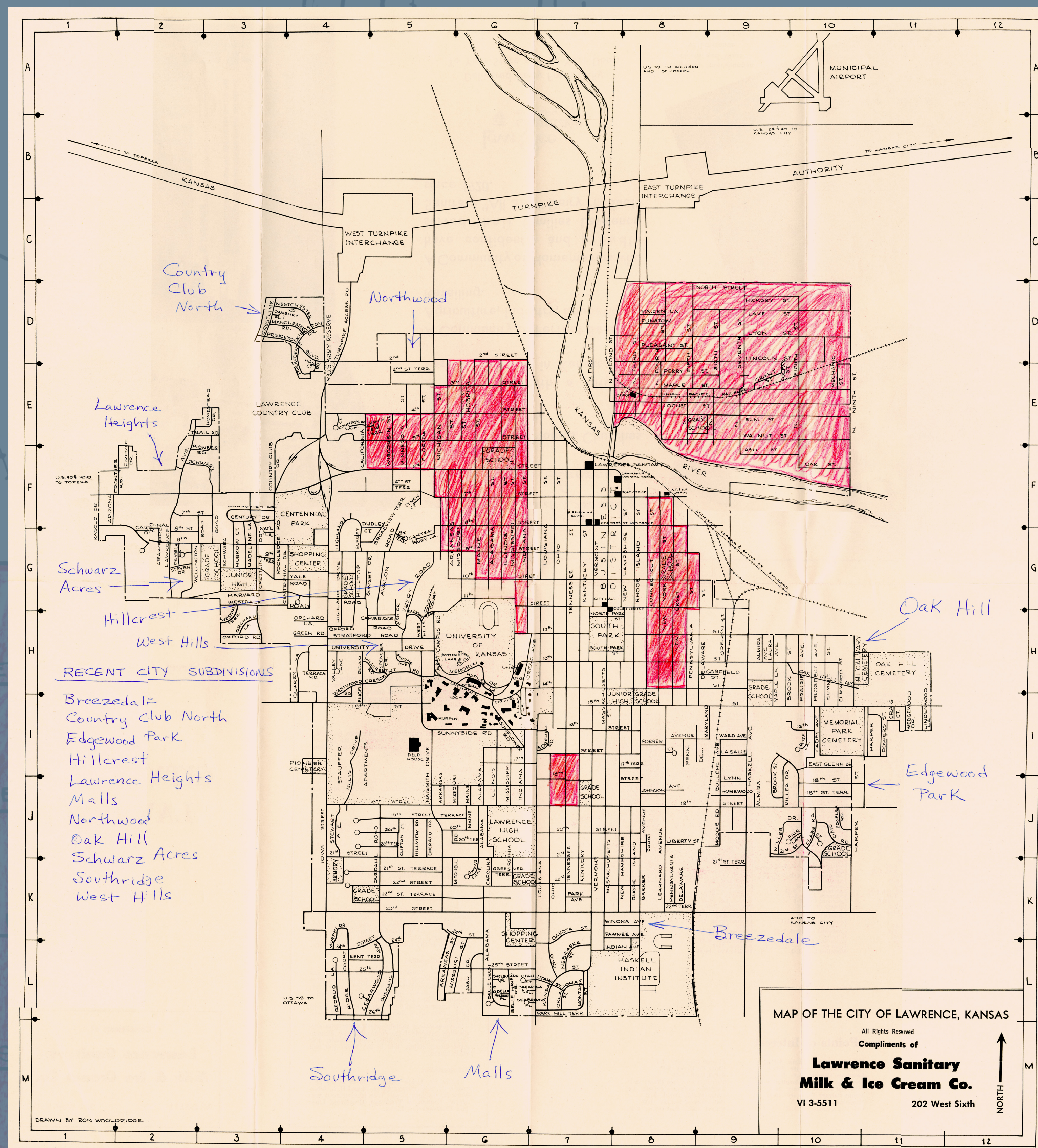
In the 1930s, brave individuals in Lawrence challenged racial discrimination. John McLendon, an African American KU student and future NBA coach, took action to end discriminatory practices at the University swimming pool. As the nation fought for democracy in Europe during World War II, organizations began to champion civil rights at home. Troops used to equal treatment by residents of the European towns and cities where they were deployed returned to the U.S. to face discrimination. Lawrence soldier Corporal Wesley S. Sims, Jr. recounted in a letter to the Daily Journal-World in November, 1945 how he and his wife visited a local theater where "the manager had the police put us, both members of the Armed Forces, out, because we would not move to the other side of the balcony." The incident caused Cpl. Sims to wonder "just what was I fighting for?"

“And segregation was right under the surface and there was always this call in the background of the New Englander tradition, a call of outrage that this shouldn't occur...”

- Judge Fred Six, Secretary of the Lawrence Human Relations Commission in 1967

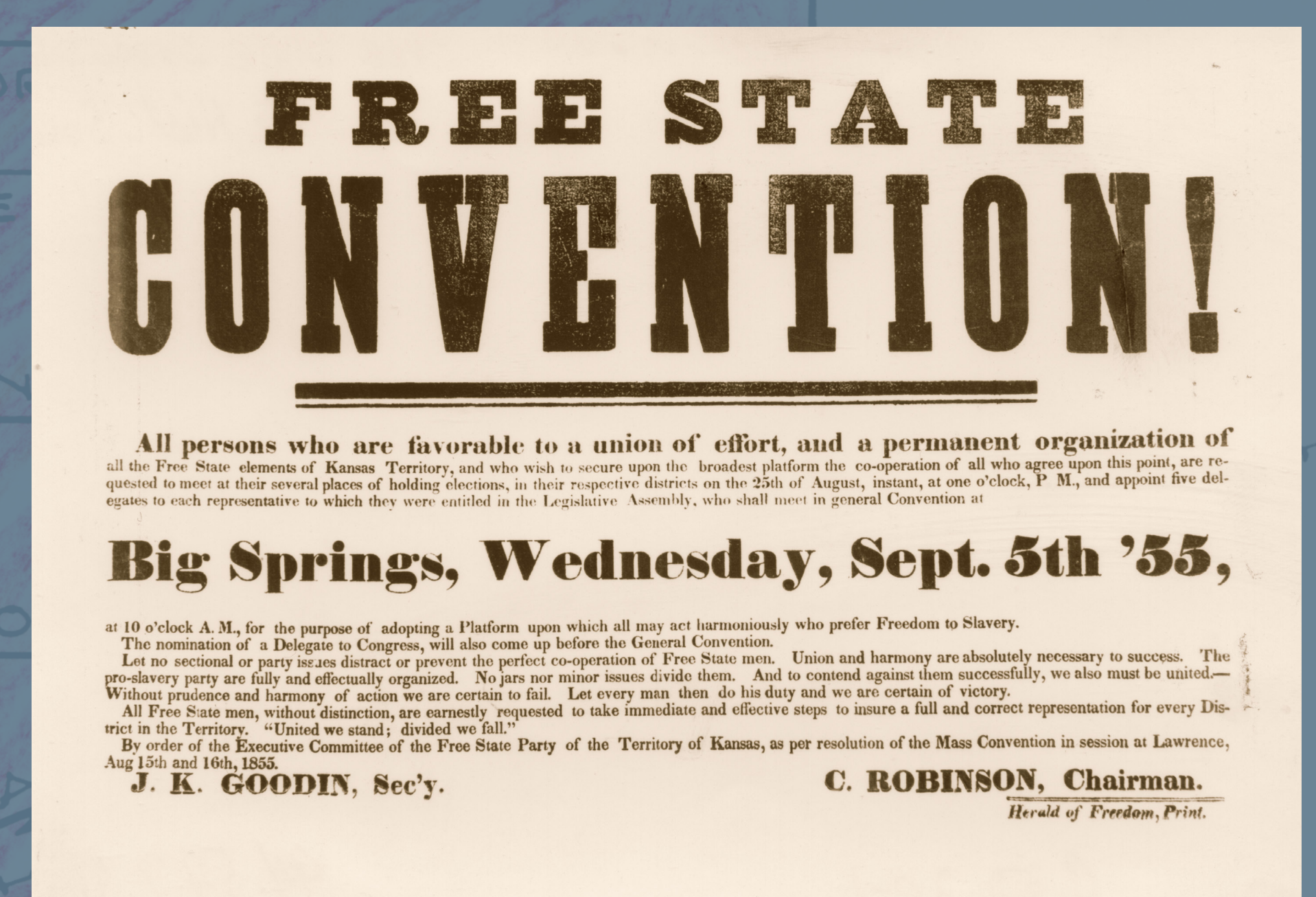
By 1947 a local chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was formed in Lawrence. CORE was dedicated to ending segregation and staged sit-ins to challenge the policies of several cafes near the KU campus. Civil rights at KU and in the community gained a high-profile champion when Franklin D. Murphy was named chancellor in 1950. Murphy was a strong supporter of racial equality. He offered to show first-run films on campus to urge Lawrence movie theaters to end segregated seating and encouraged KU's recruitment of basketball standout Wilt Chamberlain, believing it would help overcome intolerance.

As civil rights protests spread across the nation in the 1960s, community members in Lawrence became activists too. In 1960, the Lawrence League for the Practice of Democracy (LLPD) and the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) protested to desegregate the all-white Jayhawk Plunge swimming pool. Although the pool's owner closed the facility rather than desegregate it, the protest set the stage for a decade of social activism. In 1965, KU students conducted a sit-in outside the chancellor's office to demand open housing on and off campus regardless of race. Black students at Lawrence High School also fought for civil rights. Between 1968 and 1970, African American high school students staged protests demanding the hiring of black teachers and counselors, the integration of the cheerleading squad, and the introduction of courses in African American history and literature.



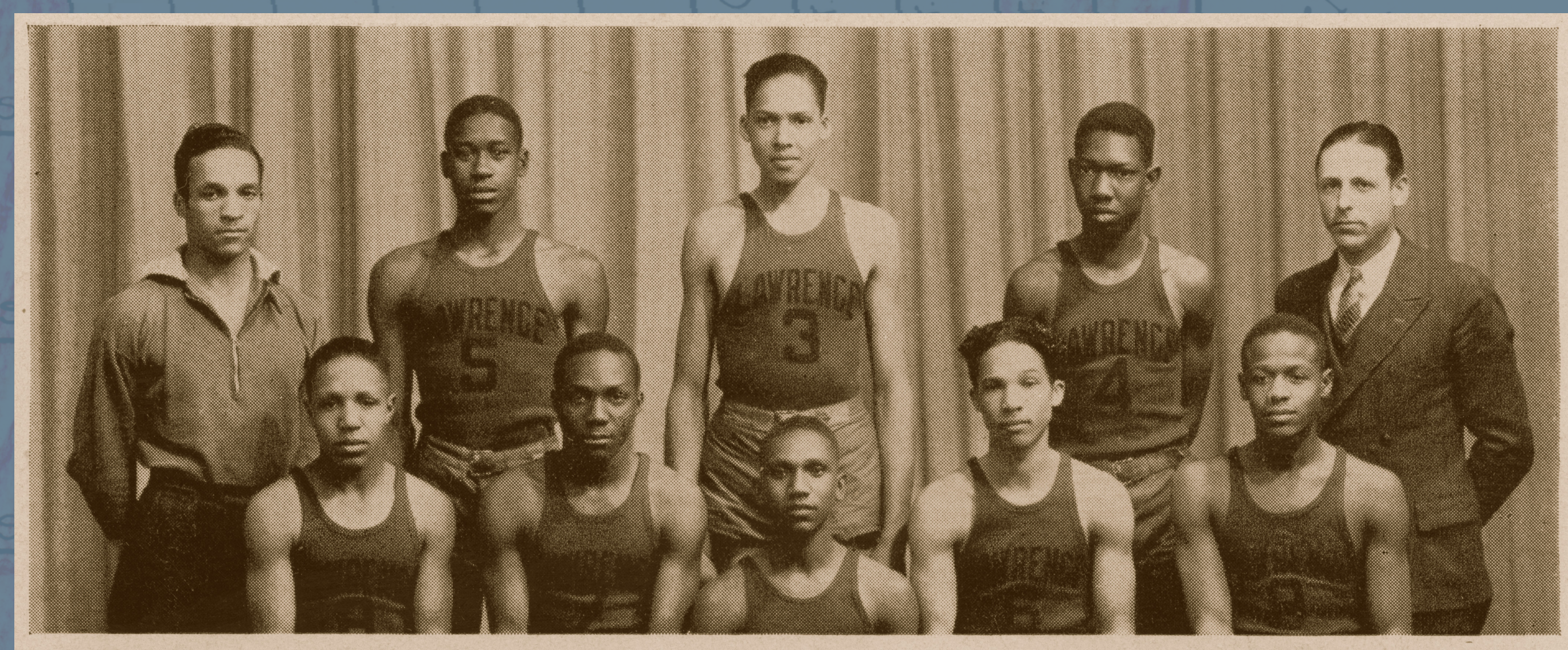
Lawrence Housing Map, 1904. Courtesy of the Kansas Collection, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas

Imagine being told where you could and could not live. This map shows the areas of Lawrence where African American residents could buy a house or rent an apartment. Black students at KU could not find housing near campus. Regardless of what they could afford to buy, black families were shown houses only in these areas. Citizens both black and white reacted against this injustice and started a movement demanding fair housing for all.



Broadside, 1855. Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society

Outraged by what they considered the "bogus" pro-slavery government established by the Kansas territorial elections of 1854—when thousands of pro-slavery Missourians came across the border to cast fraudulent votes—free-state supporters determined to organize and fight back. This broadside promoted the convention held in Big Springs to establish the Free State Party. The Party chose Lawrence as its headquarters. A period of violence followed, with pro- and anti-slavery factions facing off in several armed conflicts. In 1856, Lawrence was sacked by proslavery "border ruffians" and the Eldridge Hotel burned. By 1857, the free-state movement won control of the legislature and began drafting an anti-slavery constitution. Kansas was admitted to the Union, as a free state, in 1861.



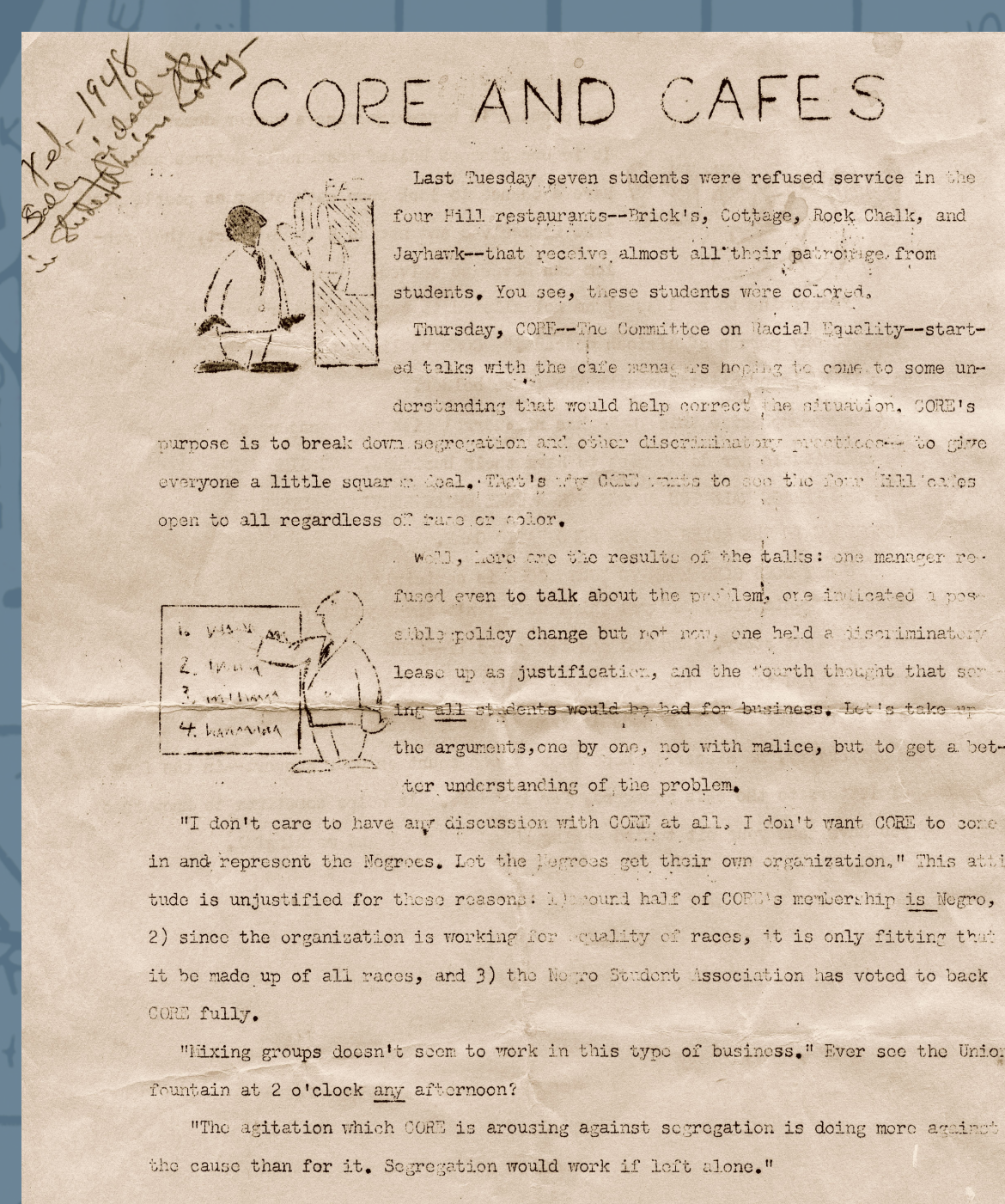
Lawrence Promoters Basketball Team, (coached by John McLendon, at far left), 1936. Douglas County Historical Society Archives

Though embracing a racially open admissions policy, the University of Kansas upheld racial separation on campus. When John McLendon entered KU in the 1930s, African American students were barred from intercollegiate athletics and many campus organizations. They sat in segregated areas at basketball games and in the cafeteria. The swimming requirement was waived for black students, who were only allowed to use the pool on the last day of the month, before it was drained. A Physical Education major, McLendon argued that he be able to take the swimming test. He convinced the University to suspend policies of segregation and, if no race-related incidents occurred for two weeks, to integrate the pool permanently. McLendon's challenge was successful and the KU pool was permanently integrated.



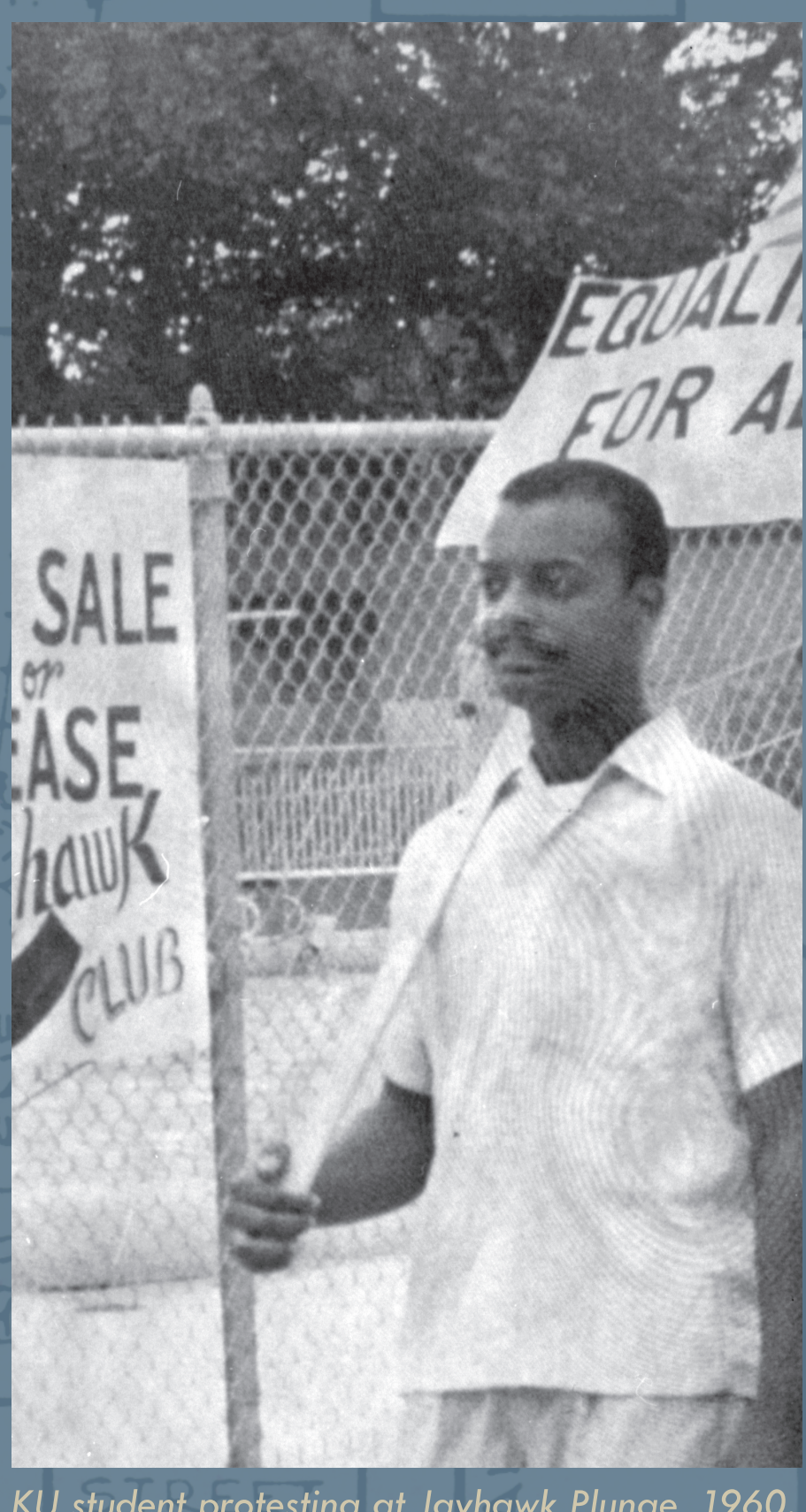
Wilt Chamberlain and Pogo Allen, 1950. Courtesy of the University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas

Celebrated as a good sportsman and encouraged to make public appearances, Wilt Chamberlain made a point of visiting segregated establishments in Lawrence, where he was not turned away. In the fall of 1957, he and fellow African American athletes at the University of Kansas, Homer Floyd, Charlie Tidwell, and Ernie Shelby, met with Chancellor Franklin Murphy to demand an end to segregated businesses and business practices in Lawrence.



Handbill, 1948. Douglas County Historical Society Archives, 2010.026.011

This anti-segregation handbill was distributed by local members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) at the KU student union. CORE pointed out examples of discrimination against black students to build awareness on campus. Flyers like this challenged generally accepted practices of racial segregation in Lawrence. Frustrated by the lack of response to their efforts to engage the owners of segregated establishments in dialogue about change, they resorted to staging sit-ins and other public protests.



KU student protesting at Jayhawk Plunge, 1960. Courtesy of the University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas



Jayhawk Plunge, 1930. Courtesy of David Dory

Before 1968, Lawrence had no public swimming pool. Whites had access to the privately-owned Jayhawk Plunge; blacks and other racial minorities had no choice but to swim in the Kansas River. After an attempt to desegregate the Jayhawk Plunge swimming pool in 1960 failed, community activists challenged the City to build an integrated city-owned pool. Three-hundred people—carrying signs with slogans such as "I want to swim in Lawrence" and "Wanted: A Desegregated Heart"—participated in a "Freedom March" from St. Luke AME Church to the Douglas County Courthouse in 1963. Their efforts were ultimately successful when, in 1967, residents voted to approve a bond issue to fund a City pool. An integrated pool opened to the public the following year.



Lawrence High School protest, 1970. Courtesy of the Kansas Collection, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas

In April 1970, after a year and a half of protests and unsuccessful negotiations, black students at Lawrence High School expressed their frustration by forcing their way into the principal's office to demand action. Fights broke out between white and black students. The police intervened with tear gas and clubs. Ultimately, administrators met the students' demands for the hiring of black teachers and counselors, the integration of the cheerleading squad, and the introduction of courses in African American history and literature.



The work that provided the basis for this exhibit was supported by funding under a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The City of Lawrence and Watkins Museum are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained herein. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL ACTIVISM

### #1 ORGANIZE

- Plan events or use social media to call attention to the issues
- Engage with people one-on-one about the issues
- Build a coalition of support
- Find resources to cover expenses like feeding volunteers, mailings, protest signs, or flyers
- Support volunteers by arranging for transportation or childcare

## CHANGE FROM THE BOTTOM UP

The push for fair housing legislation arose as part of a national civil rights movement fighting practices of segregation and discrimination. In Lawrence, individuals and groups organized to voice their experiences of unequal housing practices. Social advocate organizations, charities, churches, and University of Kansas staff all supported fair housing protections. Their involvement lent institutional support that included significant portions of the community and strengthened the efforts of individual activists. The KU community argued in favor of fair housing to support faculty, staff, and future employees who might refuse to work and live in a town that tolerated discrimination.

In 1964, the Lawrence branch of the NAACP released *Survey of the Lawrence Negro*, which outlined the economic and social discrimination African Americans faced in Lawrence, including access to fair housing. The same year, the United Church Women of Lawrence (UCWL) circulated a letter regarding fair housing in the city. Twenty-five churches made the letter and petition available to their congregations. Nearly 900 individuals signed in support of fair housing practices. By the end of 1964, the NAACP, the UCWL, the League of Women Voters, and other organizations joined forces to create the Lawrence Fair Housing Coordinating Committee. Citizens adopted a methodical approach that took advantage of strong community support for fair housing and worked within established governmental systems to achieve their goal.

“Well, I guess I’d have to be proud of the fact that we did stand up for what we thought were our rights, that we did not falter when things did not go our way...”

- Dorothy Harvey, NAACP Member and Fair Housing Activist in 1967

Experiences of discriminatory housing practices in Lawrence were varied and personal. Many citizens shared stories of realtors refusing to show homes in specific neighborhoods and of landlords who claimed all the apartments in a building being constructed were leased upon learning the ethnicity of an applicant or who refused to rent to individuals of color and interracial families. They presented their case to the Lawrence Human Relations Commission, an advisory group formed in 1961 to address inequality in the city. HRC acted in early 1965 to “find constructive, orderly solutions to unequal housing opportunities.”



Granada Theater, 1940s, Douglas County Historical Society, 2001.028.023

In the 1940s and '50s racial prejudices remained common. Discrimination affected the lives of all racial minorities in Lawrence, particularly African Americans. In some theaters, black customers were required to sit in separate sections humiliatingly outlined by a paint stripe across the back of the seat or had to sit in the balcony. When the movie ended, they were made to wait until white customers left the theater. The Granada, like many local restaurants, completely refused service to blacks.



Study No. 10. Two families occupy this old derelict. Built as near as I could learn, in 1868. The upstairs is partly unused because the roof leaks into one room, and "The children might fall through the holes"

Study Number 10 from *The Lower Twenty-five Percent*, a housing study conducted for a sociology class at the University of Kansas, 1938-39

A Depression-era study of housing conditions among the poor and unemployed in Lawrence highlighted the deplorable living conditions endured by the city's poorest residents, many of them African Americans and Mexican Americans. Many of the areas described in the study as affording only "run-down" or "shabby" housing were primarily populated by African Americans and other racial minorities.



March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963. Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Selma to Montgomery March, 1965. Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Starting in the years after WWII and reaching national consciousness in the 1960s, the civil rights movement sought to address social, economic, and civil inequalities for marginalized communities, primarily African Americans, in the United States. Individuals denied access to jobs, public spaces, housing, and basic civil rights such as voting, protested and campaigned throughout the 1960s to end systematic oppression. National campaigns inspired protests and the formation of civil rights organizations locally, including those spearheading efforts for fair housing in Lawrence. Local branches of national organizations, including NAACP and CORE, along with local organizations such as the Lawrence League for the Practice of Democracy, worked for change in Lawrence while national movements attempted to sway the federal government.



KU Students protest the discriminatory housing practices of KU fraternities and sororities, 1964. Courtesy of the University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas



Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) demonstration on the steps of Lawrence City Hall, now the Watkins Museum, 1964. Courtesy of the University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas

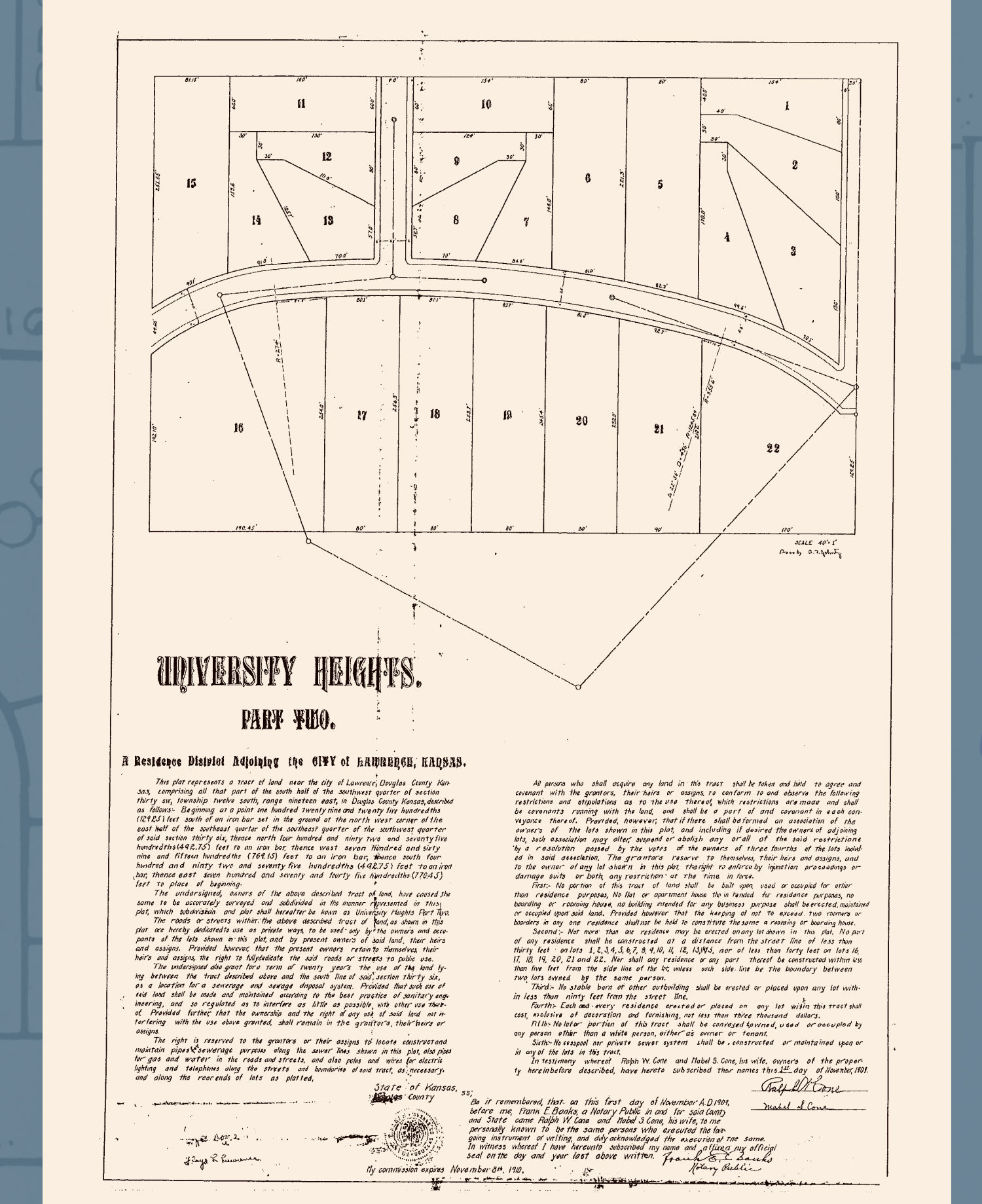
In 1947, University of Kansas students organized a local chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). They worked to build awareness of discrimination on campus, staged anti-segregation protests, and fought for equal housing for KU students. CORE's mid-1960s campaign to end discrimination in campus housing and social organizations extended naturally to the issue of fair housing in the city. They were among the community organizations that built support for equal housing and worked to pass legislation in Lawrence.

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE
Donald Boyd	1525 2nd	3-2028
Mr. & Mrs. J. W. ...	518 ...	3-2117
Miss ...	311 W. 5th St.	3-2115
Mrs. ...	100 ...	3-2026
Mrs. ...	446 ...	3-2023
Robert ...	716 ...	3-1793
Mr. & Mrs. ...	414 ...	3-2020
Mr. & Mrs. ...	608 ...	3-2040
Mr. & Mrs. ...	375 ...	3-2029
Mr. ...	784 ...	3-2074
Mr. & Mrs. ...	530 ...	3-2075
Mr. & Mrs. ...	112 ...	3-2045
...	...	...

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE
Mr. & Mrs. ...	100 ...	3-2020
Mr. & Mrs. ...	128 ...	3-2020
Mr. & Mrs. ...	100 ...	3-2026
Mr. & Mrs. ...	...	3-2027
Mr. & Mrs. ...	...	3-2028
Mr. & Mrs. ...	...	3-2029
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Mr. & Mrs. ...	...	3-2099
Mr. & Mrs. ...	...	3-2100

NAACP Survey of Negro Homes. Courtesy of the Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas

How does where you live affect your life? For African Americans in Lawrence during the civil rights era it was an indication of larger inequalities. A housing survey conducted by the NAACP in 1963-64 found that, in addition to facing discrimination when choosing a place to live, African Americans in Lawrence experienced disadvantages when seeking employment and limited economic opportunities overall.



Floor Plan, University Heights, Part Two. Courtesy of the Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas

Realtors and home owners refused to show renters and potential home-buyers homes in specific neighborhoods. Those opposed to the Fair Housing Ordinance argued that neighborhood desegregation would decrease property values. Restrictive covenants, clauses included in a deed or lease that limit what the owner can do with the property or to whom it could be sold, were often used to ensure that neighborhoods remained segregated.





## TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL ACTIVISM

### #3 PERSUADE

- Prepare for meetings in advance
- Present your concerns and personal encounters with the issue; propose solutions concisely
- Leave written copies of your proposals and contact information
- Follow up with letters, emails, and telephone calls from your coalition to illustrate wide-spread support
- Time your follow-up activities to coordinate with legislative sessions

## WORKING FOR YOU

Amid the protests of the late 1950s and early 1960s the Lawrence City Commission created the Lawrence Human Relations Commission (HRC). Since 1961, the HRC has promoted civil rights and challenged discrimination in Lawrence. In 1964, before the passage of the city's Fair Housing Ordinance, the HRC advised the development of City Ordinance 3373, which prohibited the owner, manager, or any employee of public accommodations, including hotels, restaurants, swimming pools, and other places of recreation, from providing services or access to facilities based on race, creed, color or national origins. Over time, the HRC has come to address issues of discrimination based not only on race, but on sex, religion, color, national origin, age, ancestry, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, or family status.

The HRC exists today for the same reason it was created in 1961: "To open the way for each individual, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin, to develop according to his abilities without limitation." The nine member commission, representing the diverse racial, ethnic, commercial, and industrial make-up of the Lawrence community, works to eliminate discrimination in employment, public accommodations, and housing. The HRC also studies the problem of discrimination and other matters that impact community relations or may have an adverse effect on good will and cooperation among the diverse groups that make up the population of Lawrence. Members volunteer their service and are appointed to three-year terms by the mayor.

“Until everyone has equal access to housing, employment, and public accommodations, the work of the Human Relations Committee is still vitally important to the community.”

- Scott Criqui, Lawrence Human Relations Commissioner, 2009-2015

Maintaining visibility is a challenge, especially at a time when budget cutbacks are forcing many cities in Kansas to disband their human relations committees. Lawrence's HRC continues its service to the community today thanks to a partnership with the City Attorney's office. The HRC works closely with the Lawrence City Attorney's office and serves as an advocate and resource for the residents of Lawrence—increasing awareness of what constitutes discrimination today, building understanding of the protections the law provides, and following national trends to ensure Lawrence's ordinance continues to protect the community's most vulnerable. The Commission holds quarterly meetings to address, investigate, and resolve community complaints and issues of discrimination. Members of the HRC or the City Attorney's office work with people who suspect they have been discriminated against to help them understand the nuances of discrimination law. If a law has been broken, they help victims navigate what can be a very intimidating legal process.

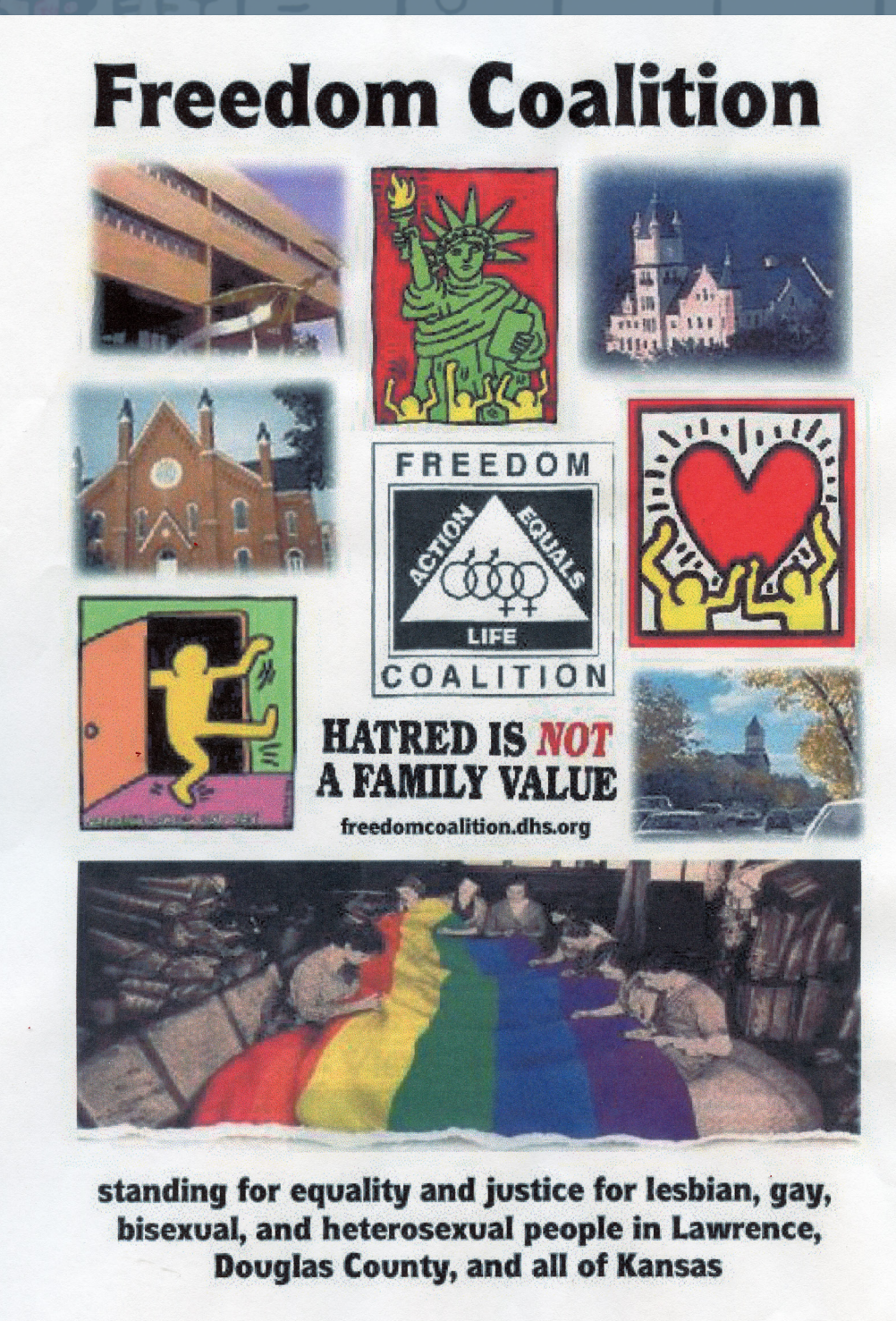


Fair Housing Poster, Kaylee Clancy, Langston Hughes Elementary School, Courtesy of the City of Lawrence



Fair Housing Poster, Eliza Trujillo, Bishop Seabury Academy, Courtesy of the City of Lawrence

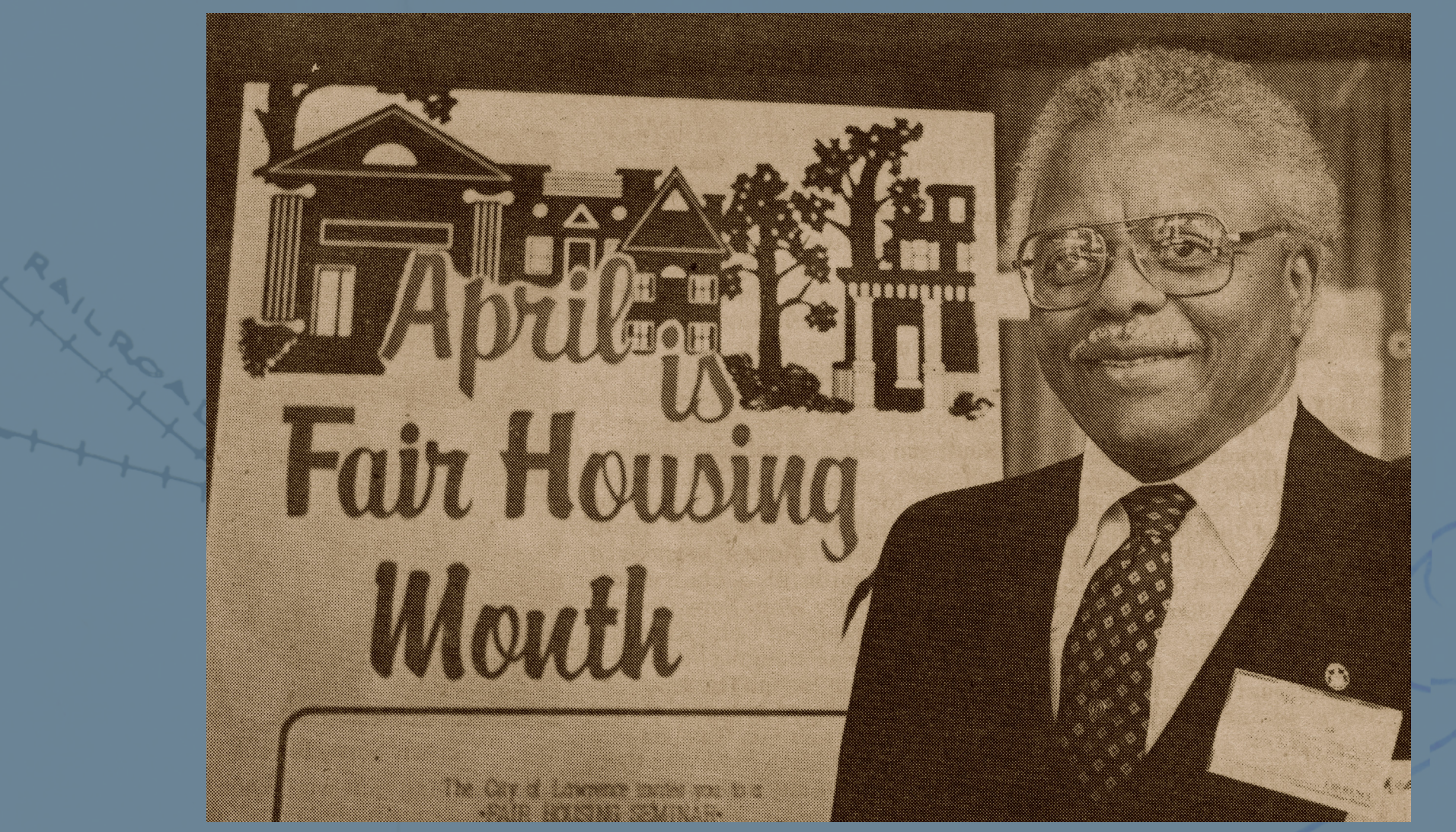
The HRC is committed to eliminating and preventing discrimination in employment, public accommodations, and housing and assuring equal opportunity for all persons within the City of Lawrence. The Commission sponsors activities to increase public awareness of civil rights protections. Outreach activities have included seminars and educational talks during Fair Housing Month in April of each year, a Fair Housing Poster/Art contest involving students across Lawrence, and creation of educational videos to increase understanding of the law. Social media is also used to help people understand what discrimination looks like and what to do if discrimination occurs.



Freedom Coalition, Douglas County Historical Society Archives

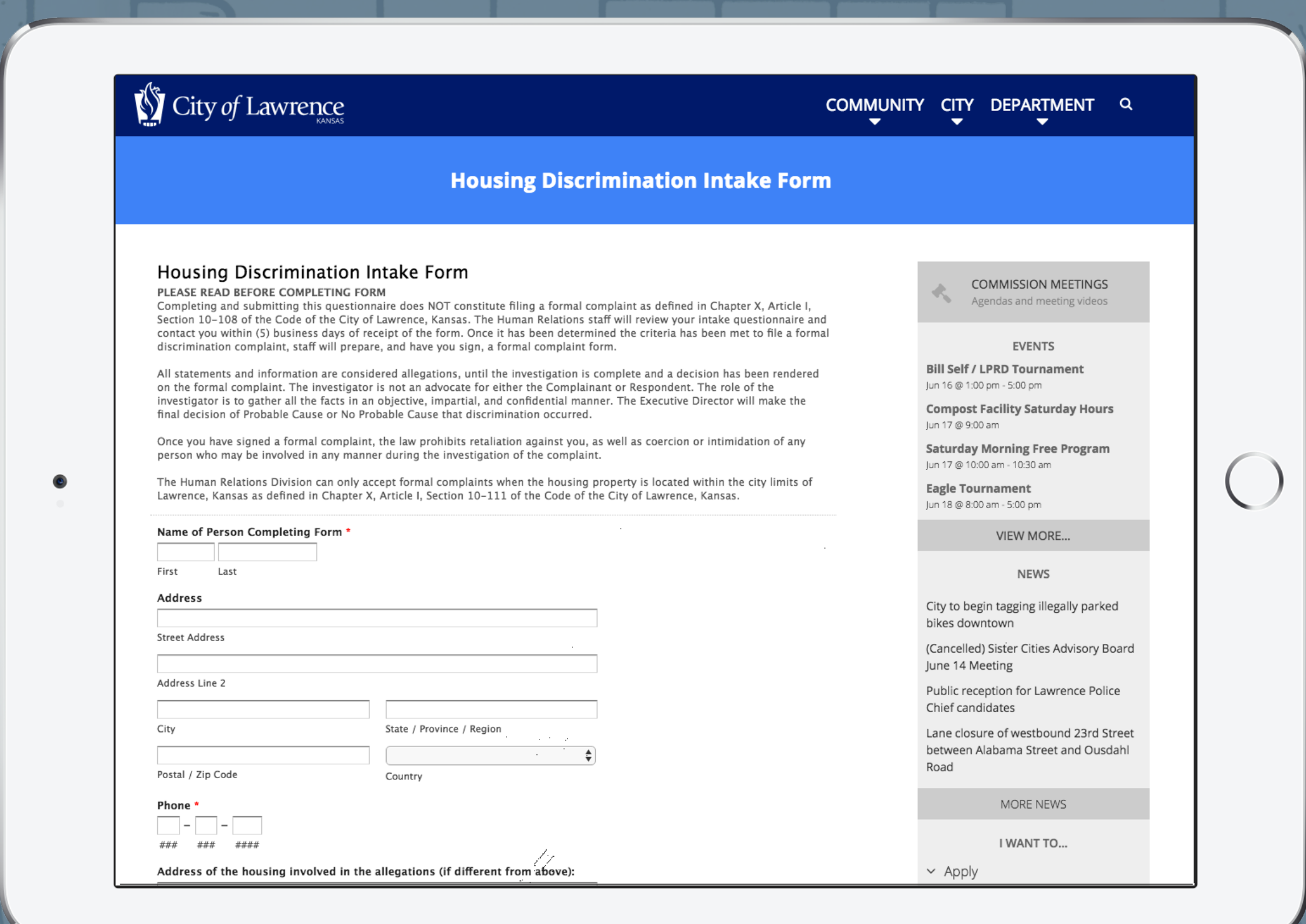


KU Student Protest, 1992, Courtesy of the University Archives, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas



Jesse Milton, 1988, Douglas County Historical Society

Since passage of Lawrence's Fair Housing Ordinance, the Human Relations Commission has continued to advocate for fair housing and address issues of discrimination in public accommodations and employment. Over time, it has worked to expand the definition of discrimination as defined in the ordinance to include sex, age, ancestry, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, or familial status. The HRC continues to educate Lawrence residents regarding their rights and protection under the law and ensure that landlords are aware of their rights and responsibilities.



Housing Discrimination Intake Form, City of Lawrence website

Do you feel you may have been subject to discrimination? The Lawrence Human Relations Commission can help. The HRC can be contacted by phone at (785) 832-3310, by fax at (785) 832-6198 and by e-mail at [humanrelations@lawrenceks.org](mailto:humanrelations@lawrenceks.org). The City of Lawrence makes forms to lodge complaints of discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodation available through the City website at [lawrenceks.org/attorney](http://lawrenceks.org/attorney). When complaints are received, City Attorney's staff or Commissioners work with complainants to help them better understand their circumstances, explain how redress might be achieved, and guide them through the process. Want to get involved? The City Attorney's office accepts applications from those interested in serving on the HRC.



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